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642 of diplomatic relations, led to the resignation of the Tubelis Government. But the Cabinet formed on March 24, with Father Mironas as Prime Minister, included both M. Tubelis himself and M. Loszoraitis, who retained the portfolio of Foreign Affairs; while any hope of a broadening of the base of representation was disappointed by the exclusion of the Opposition from the new Government.

V. FOREIGN RELATIONS[1]

Introduction

131 The emergence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as independent States required the fall of two great empires, the Russian and the German. To-day their international significance lies in the fact that, together with Poland, they form a buffer between two first-class modern Powers, the Third German Reich and the Soviet Union, and this not merely in a strategic but also in an ideological and an economic sense: strategic, since in the event of either Great Power attacking the other, the role of Belgium in the Great War might well be thrust upon the Baltic States,[2] and their territory be converted into a theatre of war; ideological, because they constitute a narrow wedge between Communist and National-Socialist totalitarian States, to whose rival propagandas they are dangerously exposed; and finally economic, since, on the one hand, the whole area consists of thinly populated agricultural country which is regarded by Germany as being peculiarly suited to extensive German colonization, while, on the other hand, it is a corridor for Russian trade with Western Europe and a seaboard which the Soviet Union might at some time consider it desirable to repossess. Moreover, if either Russia or Germany were to take possession of these countries, the Baltic Sea would be in danger of becoming little more than a private lake.

648 829 This antithesis between Germany and Russia did not, however, become apparent in any marked degree until comparatively recently. For the first decade of their history the new Baltic States regarded the Soviet Union as the common menace; Germany was a defeated and disarmed enemy, and it was not until the rise to power of the Nazi movement in 1933 that they began to entertain fears of danger from that quarter.

The problem of how to secure some measures of security *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union confronted all the north-eastern Succession States,

[1] For a detailed record of the Baltic in international affairs, see relevant sections of the *Survey of International Affairs* for 1920–3, 1924, 1925 (vol. ii), 1927, 1932, 1934, 1935 (vol. i), and 1936, issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs and published by the Oxford University Press.

[2] Although, since the loss of Vilna, Lithuania has no longer a common frontier with the U.S.S.R.

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including Finland and Poland; but the policy which they adopted in dealing with it varied according to their respective geographical positions and their different political and economic connexions with pre-War Russia, as well as to their special affinities with, or revulsions from, other Powers or one another.

Estonia and Latvia had most to fear from the U.S.S.R. and most to gain from a close Baltic Union, partly on account of their common frontiers with the U.S.S.R., which exposed them to the infiltration of Communism to a dangerous extent, but chiefly because their territory had formerly contained the main outlets of Russian trade with the West. The old Russian ports of Riga, Windau (Ventspils), and Libau (Liepāja) were now Latvian, while Reval (Tallinn), Pernau (Pārnu), and Baltic Port (Paldiski) had fallen to Estonia. Of these, Libau and Baltic Port had been Tsarist Russia's principal naval bases, while Riga had been her third largest Western port, ranking after St. Petersburg and Odessa. All of them were linked up by railways with Great Russia.[1] The serious economic consequences for the new Republics, even more than for the U.S.S.R., of their political separation from their natural hinterland, are described elsewhere.[2]

Lithuania, who (after 1920) had no common frontier with the U.S.S.R., had less cause for anxiety in that direction, and was, therefore, relatively indifferent to the advantages of a Baltic Union. In any case successive Governments were preoccupied by prolonged disputes with Poland over Vilna, and later with Germany over Memel.[3] The Vilna dispute, in particular, prevented her for a long time from participating in any form of Baltic *bloc*, since the other interested Powers refused to sign any pact which might involve them in a conflict with Poland, while Lithuania herself refused to sign one from which that possibility had been eliminated.[4]

Finland[5] also, owing to her geographical position, was spared extreme fear of the Soviet Union, since even if the latter were to become involved in a war with Poland or Germany, Finnish territory and neutrality would not necessarily be violated. Moreover, a large proportion of the population, and particularly of the aristocracy, was Swedish, and there was a thriving Swedish political party; in consequence Finland showed a strong tendency to orientate towards the Scandinavian rather than towards the Baltic States, and a marked

[1] See map.

[2] See below, pp. 192-4.

[3] These disputes are treated in detail in Section VI, p. 89.

[4] Latvia's attitude towards the Vilna dispute was complicated by the fact that the trunk railway connecting the port of Liepāja with Romny, in Russia, passed through Lithuanian territory before entering Poland, so that her trade with that country, as well as with Russia, was affected by the closing of the Lithuanian-Polish frontier.

[5] Finland's foreign policy is dealt with in more detail in the handbook in this series dealing with the Scandinavian States.